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FOR INFORMATION

STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC CHILD BUREAU ON BEHALF OF
THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTEE ON UNICEF, WORKING GROUPS
ON CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN, IN SUPPORT OF
A REVIEW OF UNICEF POLICIES AND STRATEGIES ON CHILD PROTECTION

1. We strongly support the review of UNICEF policies and strategies on child protection and urge the UNICEF Executive Board to adopt the draft recommendations on the implementation of special protection measures of children.
2. The review of UNICEF policies and strategies on child protection comes at a critical juncture. During the last decade, UNICEF estimates that 2 million children have been killed as a result of armed conflict, 4 million to 5 million have been disabled, 12 million were left homeless, more than 1 million have been orphaned or separated from their parents, and 10 million have been psychologically traumatized. The International Labour Organisation estimates that 200 million children are exploited by child labour and the World Health Organization estimates that 150 million children suffer from some form of childhood disabilities. In view of the complexity of all these issues, it will be difficult to make an impact without the concerted effort of the different parties from a multidimensional and multisectoral approach that calls for action.
3. Yet, for the first time in history, there is an international legally binding document - the Convention on the Rights of the Child - which calls on Governments to make provisions for the survival, protection and development of children.
4. We welcome the current review, which is a progression from the 1986 UNICEF policy paper on children in especially difficult circumstance, in so far as it analyses the systemic causes of all forms of exploitation, abuse or neglect of children.
5. We would like to call your attention to the following particularly noteworthy points:

(a) The proposed strategy moves beyond the traditional concept of children in especially difficult circumstance, focusing on hardship situations and circumstances rather than specific categories of children. Consequently, the strategy provides a framework for addressing all such situations as appropriate, including flagrant violations of children's rights;

(b) The strategy adopts the concept of "special protection measures" developed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child;

(c) The strategy establishes a most welcome agenda for close partnerships with civil society, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It recognizes the value of full community participation in our ongoing work addressing child protection issues.

6. We would like to encourage the UNICEF Executive Board to recommend that UNICEF give specific attention to children affected by the following circumstances:

(a) Those children who are targets of organized violence;

(b) The unmet psycho-social needs of children;

(c) The needs of girls concerning physical violence, early marriage and sexual mutilation.

7. Noting the draft recommendation that UNICEF enhance its capacities to give a higher profile within UNICEF programmes to the protection of children, we would like to recommend the following:

(a) That UNICEF draw from NGO field experiences, studies and resources which promote the protective factors within a family environment which contributes to child resilience;

(b) That UNICEF, in partnership with Governments and civil society, and through capacity-building, strengthen child protection strategies;

(c) That UNICEF recognize the need for sustained social mobilization and awareness-raising campaigns which accompany all programmes at the community level in the area of child protection;

(d) That UNICEF develop a strategy for strengthening its partnerships with civil society in the area of child protection;

(e) That UNICEF, in partnership with Governments and NGOs, devise monitoring mechanisms to follow-up on the impact of child protection strategies.
